

## Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 H-02 HEW-06 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHBC 8183

INFO USINT BAGHDAD

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 2092

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, BEXP, TC

SUBJECT: FOOD LABELLING LAWS IN UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

REFS: (A) STATE 181148; (B) ABU DHABI A-003.

1. UAE DOES NOT HAVE ANY NATIONAL FOOD LABELLING LAWS. LABELLING REGULATIONS ARE RESPONSIBILITY OF HEALTH DEPARTMENTS IN INDIVIDUAL EMIRATES. OF THE SEVEN EMIRATES, WHICH MAKE UP THE UAE, ONLY ABU DHABI AND DUBAI HAVE EXHIBITED INTEREST IN FOOD LABELLING QUESTION AND ONLY ABU DHABI AT PRESENT HAS LEGISLATION CONCERNING THE SUBJECT: IN OTHER EMIRATES, THE MATTER IS DEALT WITH ON AN AD HOC BASIS BY EMIRATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ON THE BASIS OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED. VERY FEW COMPLAINTS RECEIVED. VERY FEW COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED DURING PAST YEARS CONCERNING LABELLING. MOST INTEREST CENTRES ON CONDITION OF FRESH FOOD AND VEGETABLES WITH OCCASSIONAL QUERIES FROM DEVOUT MUSLIMS ABOUT POSSIBLE PORK PRODUCTS IN PROCESSED FOODS.

2. FOLLOWING INFO FOR DUBAI- WHERE TWO-THIRDS OF UAE FOOD IMPORTS LAND-- IS KEYED TO NUMBERED QUESTIONS PARA 3 REFTEL.  
(1) DUBAI HAS NO LAWS OR REGULATIONS CURRENTLY ON LABELLING.  
(2) DUBAI IS NOT CONTEMPLATING ESTABLISHING SUCH LAWS IN VIEW OF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER DAVID BELL, DUBAI MUNICIPALITY,  
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P.O. BOX 67, DUBAI, UAE. ONE REGULATION WAS PROPAGATED IN SUMMER 1977 REQUIRING DATE MARKING OF PROCESSED FOODS. THIS REGULATION WAS ONLY IN EFFECT ABOUT ONE MONTH BEFORE ITS REVOCATION BECAUSE THE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER CONSIDERS THAT DATES ON PROCESSED FOOD ARE NOT PARTICULARLY USEFUL GUIDE LINES TO ITS CONDITION IN EXTREMELY HOT AREAS SUCH AS THE UAE. LOCAL MERCHANTS OF COURSE, ALSO LOOKED WITH DISFAVOR UPON THIS LAW. AT PRESENT ALL FOOD LABELLING QUES-

TIONS IN DUBAI ARE TREATED ON AN AD HOC BASIS BY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER DAVID BELL.

(3) SINCE THERE ARE NO LAWS OR REGULATIONS, THEY DO NOT AFFECT IMPORTS.

(4) IN ABSENCE OF LAWS NEITHER ENFORCEMENT NOR PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE EXISTS. WHEN PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER ACTS IN RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS, HE APPEALS TO LOCAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM FOR RELIEF OF SPECIFIC CASE, USUALLY SEIZURE OF FOOD, FINE FOR PURVEYOR OR, CONCEIVABLY BUT UNLIKELY, IMPRISONMENT.

3. OTHER MAJOR IMPORTING EMIRATE IS ABU DHABI. ITS RESPONSES TO SAME QUESTIONS ARE:

(1) EMIRATE OF ABU DHABI DOES HAVE LAW ON LABELLING COVERING ALL FOUR COMPONENTS OF LABELLING. IT WAS SENT TO SECSTATE AS REF B. LAW PUBLISHED DECEMBER 1, 1977 GOES INTO EFFECT ON DECEMBER 1, 1978. RECENT CHANGE TO LAW SIGNIFICANTLY MODIFIED IT SO THAT ARABIC LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT ON LABELS WILL NOW NOT REPEAT NOT BE NECESSARY WHEN LAW GOES INTO EFFECT. TEXT OF CHANGE IS NOT YET AVAILABLE BUT WILL BE SENT TO SECSTATE AND USDA/FAS/ETSD WHEN PUBLISHED. LAW COVERS NUTRITION, DATE OF MANUFACTURE AND EXPIRATION, COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, INGREDIENTS, NET WEIGHT, ETC. IT IS BASED ON ARAB LEAGUE'S ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR WEIGHTS AND MEASURES CIRCULAR NO. 61- 1972 T/D/A/ 676,811. ABU DHABI HAS TRIED TO ENCOURAGE OTHER EMIRATES TO FOLLOW SAME ARAB LEAGUE RECOMMENDATIONS BUT WITH NO SUCCESS.

(2) ABU DHABI IS NOT NOW CONTEMPLATING FURTHER LEGISLATION, UNCLASSIFIED

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ALTHOUGH PRO-ARABIZATION/PRESSURES FOR COMPULSORY ARABIC LABELLING MIGHT ARISE IN THE FUTURE. ALTERNATIVELY, MERCHANT OR POPULAR PRESSURE MIGHT CAUSE THE ROLL-BACK OF SOME ASPECTS OF THE PRESENT LAW UPON ITS LIKELY PRICE RISE EFFECTS BEING FELT POST DECEMBER 1, 1978.

(3) SINCE THE ABU DHABI LAW HAS NOT COME INTO EFFECT, IT HAS NOT YET AFFECTED IMPORTS. PROBABLE EFFECT OF LAW WILL BE TO FAVOR SUPPLIERS (ALMOST ALL ARAB) WHO CONFORM TO ARAB LEAGUE SPECIFICATIONS. ONLY ONE US EXPORTER HAS COMPLAINED TO THE EMBASSY. MERCHANTS ARE SOMEWHAT APPREHENSIVE THAT AFTER DECEMBER IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW SELECTION WILL BE MORE LIMITED AND SOME WESTERN SUPPLIERS MAY NOT BOTHER WITH RELATIVELY SMALL UAE MARKET, EVEN IF ITS IDIOSYNCRACIES CONFORM TO ARAB LEAGUE SPECIFICATIONS.

(4) THE MEANS TO ENFORCE COMPLIANCE WHICH THE LAW SPELLS OUT ARE SEIZURE OF THE OFFENDING GOODS, FINES OF BETWEEN ONE AND TWO THOUSAND DIRHAMS (1 DOL. EQUALS 3.90DH.) OR BY IMPRISONMENT FOR A MAXIMUM PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS. MR. ALI HARB, PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, ABU DHABI MUNICIPALITY, P.O. BOX 263, ABU DHABI, UAE, IS THE OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LAW IS IMPLEMENTATION IN ABU DHABI  
DICKMAN

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## Message Attributes

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